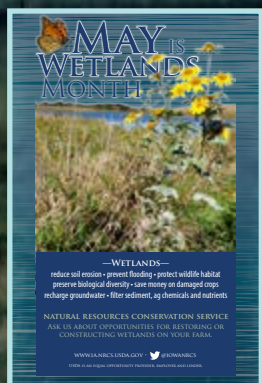




United States Department of Agriculture

IOWA CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

April/May 2016



MAY IS WETLANDS MONTH!

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TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGY SURVEY SAYS... PAGE 10

NATURAL RESOURCES
CONSERVATION SERVICE

www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov



Wetland Scene, Van Buren County

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Iowa Conservation Woman of the Year
Award

a **Message** from the **State Conservationist**



Kurt Simon,
State Conservationist

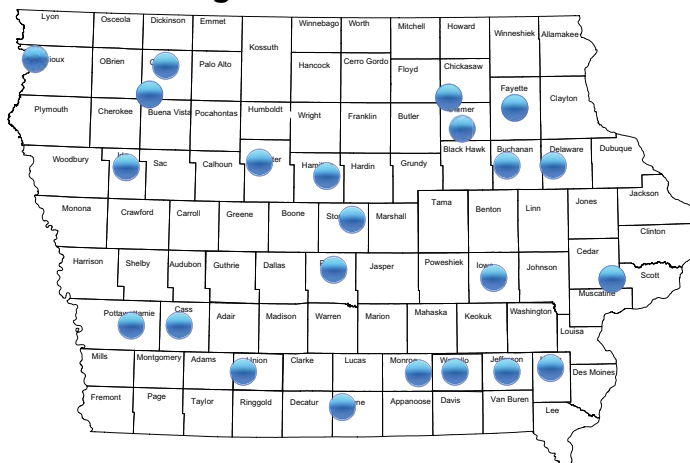
Around the state in (almost) 90 days

I will be wrapping up the last of the listening sessions in May. It has been extremely helpful and I have enjoyed meeting all of you. It's been a tremendous opportunity for me. The sub-area meetings started on January 26 at my first Pizza Ranch in Creston and will wrap up this month with two listening sessions in Des Moines with the Leadership Team and the State Office Staff.

The past 7 months have been a whirlwind of meeting new people, establishing relationships with partners, and getting a firm understanding of and appreciation for the NRCS mission here in Iowa.

I will spend the next few months developing action plans based on what I have learned from you and the partners. These plans will be vetted with field staff, and revised if needed, to ensure the changes improve the customer service you receive from the State Office.

Listening Session Locations



IOWA CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

Current Developments is a product of the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service in Des Moines, Iowa, published bimonthly by the Iowa NRCS Public Affairs Staff in cooperation with NRCS and partner agency employees from across the state.

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS STORIES AND PHOTOS

Please submit your Current Developments story ideas and photos to State Public Affairs Specialist Laura Crowell at laura.crowell@ia.usda.gov. Past issues can be found at www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/ia/people/employees/?cid=nrcs142p2_008273



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A DAY IN TAMA: MESKWAKI MEET AND GREET

In early April State Conservationist Kurt Simon visited with Meskwaki tribal leaders at the Toledo field office. The conversation focused on tribal participation with USDA conservation programs and the continued support they receive from the NRCS and partner staff. The tour included visiting several CRP sites, an EWP project site, the 41-head cultural buffalo herd as well as the community and tribal garden sites, which will be the home of an NRCS-funded seasonal high tunnel later this year.



State Conservationist Kurt Simon (center) visits about the Meskwaki cultural buffalo herd with Buffalo Manager Josh Swanson (left) and Natural Resources Director Jarrett Pfrimmer (right).



TAMA WLL: RED EARTH GARDEN TOUR

Join Tama County Women, Land & Legacy for an evening tour of the Red Earth Gardens at the Meskwaki Settlement on June 2. Registration begins at 6 p.m. with the tour beginning at 6:30 p.m. The Gardens are part of the Meskwaki Nation's Food Sovereignty Initiative. The Gardens market tribally-supported agriculture shares to tribal members and surrounding communities, provide fresh produce to local restaurants, farmers markets and farm stands. End the evening with dessert and some of the Red Earth Garden's own brewed teas. Please RSVP by June 1 to meloldy.bro@ia.nacdn.net or 642-484-2707, ext. 3. For more info: <http://www.facebook.com/womenlandandlegacytamacounty>.

**NRCS GOLF
TOURNAMENT
SAVE THE DATE:**

August 26

Terrace Hill Golf Course • Altoona, Iowa
2-Person, Best Shot • More Info Coming Soon!



BACK IN THE DAY



From the National NRCS Photo Gallery

Here is Vince Sitzmann a few years before he became Field Services Bureau Chief for the IDALS Division of Soil Conservation and Water Quality.

Do you have a photo for Back in the Day? Please send it to Laura Crowell at 210 Walnut Street, RM 693 Neal Smith Federal Building, Des Moines, IA, 50309 or laura.crowell@ia.usda.gov.

SOIL HEALTH: EN ESPAÑOL

A new web page has been developed by the NRCS soil health communications team, which offers a convenient location for visitors to access Spanish-language soil



health-related publications and to view soil health video demonstrations and public service announcements. Additional Spanish-language materials and videos will be added to the site throughout the year. Click [here](#) to visit the site or view the new Spanish-language television public service announcements "Milagro," "La vida sin los suelos," and "En realidad, es vida."

NRCS MENTORING: BUILDING STRONG LEADERS

This is a time of change. We are all very busy working with our customers, refreshing our conservation planning skills, and working to get conservation on the land. We all have strengths and weaknesses and with the Iowa Mentoring Program we can work together to build stronger leaders.

All employees are eligible to participate in NRCS Mentoring and are encouraged to do so. Supervisory approval is required to participate. USDA policy requires a Mentor for the following categories of employees: 1. Pathways Program recent graduates; 2. New supervisors (individuals who have never been a federal supervisor before); 3. Presidential

Management Fellows; 4. SES candidate development program participants.

If you are interested in being a mentor or a protégé, you can apply online at [USDA Mentoring Portal](#). Before applying, please request your supervisor's approval. Your supervisor will receive an automatic e-mail notification during the online application process to approve/deny your request to participate. If you're interested, please contact Shelly Grimmus, State Mentoring Coordinator, at (515) 284-6655 or Shelly.Grimmus@ia.usda.gov.



Title: District Conservationist,
Manchester Field Office

College Education:

Gabe graduated in 2007, from California State University, Chico, with a degree in Land Stewardship. He said the classwork was a great mix of natural resource management and production agriculture.

Younger Years: He grew up in Northern California, north of Sacramento, on the eastern edge of the Central Valley. Agriculture there was very diverse. That part of California produces orchard crops, rice, wheat, beef and timber. It's a fairly rural area and Gabe worked on some cattle ranches and farms through high school. His family did not farm for a living but had some acreage and a few beef cows.

Conservation Career: Gabe has had a diverse career. He has trained hunting dogs, worked as a landscaper, a farm hand, and a nurseryman at a local plant nursery. During college he worked on a ranch doing vegetation management work in collaboration with The Nature Conservancy. Gabe joined NRCS in 2006 as an intern, and since then has served as a Soil Conservationist, Soil Conservationist (Lead Planner) and Resource Conservationist. He was selected as the Manchester DC this April.

NRCS Goals: Gabe's goal is to provide the public with the best service possible and to conserve and improve the natural resources in his county. His priorities are soil health, water quality and wildlife habitat.

Gabe enjoys meeting and getting to know new people and working with the partnerships in Manchester (FSA, IDALS, SWCD, PF). He also enjoys learning new things, and he shared the move to Iowa has afforded him the opportunity for a lot of learnin with the different crops, soils, climate (way different climate), plants and wildlife. He said moving to Iowa has been very rewarding and he is learning something new every day.

In His Free Time: Gabe enjoys outdoor activities including hunting, fishing and hiking. His family has enjoyed the trout fishing around Manchester and exploring the state and local parks. He also enjoys native plants and is looking forward to things leafing out more so he can start learning Iowa flora.

Family: He and his wife Marissa have been married 12 years. They have four children: son, Lucas (9), Caleb (7), Josiah (5) and daughter, Charlotte (3).



Gabe Garbarino

COMING UP: IOWA SWCS SUMMER MEETING

The 2016 SWCS Summer Meeting will be Friday, June 10 at the Stanley Hydraulics Lab, 300 S. Riverside Dr., in Iowa City. Registration begins at 9:30 am. After a noon lunch, the group will tour the lab facilities. If you'd like to attend or need more information, please email Sarah Ham, southeast region representative, at sarah.ham@ia.usda.gov with the subject line "SWCS

Summer Meeting." Registration deadline is June 1. Lunch will be \$8 and payable at the meeting.

Here is a link for parking information:

<http://transportation.uiowa.edu/files/transportation.uiowa.edu/files/ParkingMap.pdf>

Fabulous Wetlands: Bill Nye The Science Guy Style

To celebrate May is Wetlands Month, enjoy this self-described wacky video featuring Bill Nye, "The Science Guy", explaining the importance and common characteristics of wetlands. This classic, filmed in 1989, was funded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the US Environmental Protection Agency.

<https://youtu.be/BeUPbGWg2KU>



TORNADO TIPS: STAY ALERT AND STAY SAFE

Each year more than 1,200 tornadoes hit the US. Here in the Midwest, tornadoes are most common in June and July between the hours of 4 and 7 p.m. However, they can occur at any time of day and year according to the National Weather Service (NWS).

During a tornado warning, the safest place to be is an underground shelter, basement or safe room.

If no underground shelter or safe room is available, a small, windowless interior room or hallway on the lowest level of a sturdy building is the safest alternative.

Mobile homes are not safe during tornadoes or other severe winds.

If you are caught outdoors, seek shelter in a basement, shelter or sturdy building. If you cannot quickly walk to a shelter immediately get into a vehicle, buckle your seat belt and try to drive to the closest sturdy shelter. If you see large

objects flying past while you are driving, pull over and park. You now have two choices:

- Stay in the car with the seat belt on. Put your head down below the windows, covering with your hands and a blanket if possible.
- If you can safely get noticeably lower than the level of the roadway, in a deep ditch for instance, exit your car and lie in that area, covering your head with your hands.



A wall cloud is an isolated cloud lowering attached to the rain-free base of the thunderstorm. The wall cloud is usually to the rear of the visible precipitation area. (Photo: NWS)

M&S
CORNER



WE ALL NEED TREES!

Soil and Water Stewardship Week, April 24 - May 1



Iowa State Conservationist Kurt Simon (left) celebrates Soil and Water Stewardship with Governor Terry Branstad and Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds at an event April 25 in Boone.

LGBTQ YOUTH EVENT: SUPPORTING SAFE SCHOOLS

Founded in 2006, the Governors Conference on LGBTQ Youth is the largest LGBTQ youth conference nationally. More than 1,000 individuals from 100 Iowa communities attended, including Iowa students, college students, professors, educators, counselors, administrators, policy makers, parents, faith leaders, youth-serving professionals, and those who just care about the wellbeing of LGBTQ youth. Students from Nebraska, Missouri, Illinois, and Minnesota also attended.

The conference strives to:

- engage and educate students, educators, parents, community leaders, youth-serving professionals, policy makers, and others concerned about issues relevant to the LGBTQ community, and
- encourage networking and activism to inspire our communities to promote diversity, equality, and social justice.

For the second year, LGBT Special Emphasis Program Manager Jean Sandstrom recruited students for Earth Team and future Pathways opportunities at the Safe Schools conference.



(ABOVE) LGBT Special Emphasis Program Manager and Civil Engineer Jean Sandstrom shares information about NRCS and careers in sustainable ag with a conference attendee. (LEFT) More than 300 stickers were distributed from the NRCS booth.

Recognizing Iowa Source Water Protection Week, May 1-8

By Laurel Foreman, State Hydrologist



The majority of Iowa's residents get their drinking water from the ground, either from a privately owned well or a community well. According to the DNR, more than half of Iowa's community wells are considered "susceptible". This means they are

vulnerable for reasons including well depth and land use around the wells.

Approximately 90 percent of Iowa's community wells are located in agricultural areas within crop fields and may potentially be impacted by row crop production.

Planning, technical solutions and partnerships are key to protecting Iowa's water resources. To assist, Iowa NRCS has been involved with Source Water Protection (SWP) workshops to help landowners understand the importance of water quality especially, within the capture zone of the municipal wells.

Iowa NRCS is also a member of the Iowa Source Water Ag Collaborative that provides information, education and outreach to agribusiness, farmers and landowners, municipal staffs, water associations, farm managers and other groups. (www.iasourcewater.org)

SWP is the act of preventing contaminants from entering public drinking water sources, both ground water (wellhead) protection and surface water protection. The IDNR SWP Program is a voluntary program and is divided into Targeted and Non-Targeted programs to better protect Iowa's drinking water supplies.

Targeted Community Water Supplies

The Source Water Protection Program for Targeted Community Water Supplies works with communities in need of addressing an existing contaminant problem in their drinking water supply. A "targeted" community is defined as:

- Has identified a contaminant(s) that is trending upward
- Nitrates above 5 mg/L and trending upward
- Shallow alluvial wells that are highly susceptible
- A willing community with willing stakeholders

Non-Targeted Community Water Supplies

The Source Water Protection Program for Non-Targeted Community Water Supplies works with all communities in Iowa that are interested in Source Water Protection. This program focuses on water supplies with nitrate levels less than 5 mg/L, nitrates not trending upward and a confining layer exists.

For more info

- www.iowadnr.gov/Environmental-Protection/Water-Quality/Source-Water-Protection
- www.iasourcewater.org
- [Cropland Conservation Practices to Protect Groundwater Sources of Drinking Water \(NRCS Factsheet\)](#)



SURVEY SAYS: HELPFUL RESPONSE FROM T&T SURVEY

The Iowa NRCS Technology and Tools Committee developed a field survey earlier this year to learn more about the needs, interest, and effectiveness of many of the tools and equipment NRCS and partner staff use in their everyday jobs.

State Conservationist Kurt Simon and other members of the Iowa NRCS Leadership Team will analyze the results and address areas of concern.

Rick Bednarek, state soil scientist and leader of the Technology and Tools Committee, emailed the survey to all staff on Monday, Jan. 18. The survey remained available for three weeks – through Friday, Feb. 12.

Survey questions were organized in three sections – Engineering (8 tools), GIS/Soils (14 tools), and Ecological Sciences (24 tools). Overall, 154 people responded to the survey – 112 NRCS employees, 36 state or district employees, and 6 contract employees.

Area 4 had the most respondents of any with 40, followed by Area 5 with 34 (see chart). Thirty-six Federal Technicians responded to the survey, the most of any discipline.

The following survey questions were asked about each tool/ piece of equipment:

- Did you know this tool existed?
- Do you know where to find this tool?
- Are you expected to use this tool as part of your job?
- Have you used this tool?
- Is this tool helpful/effective?
- Have you received training on this tool?
- Do you need additional training?

Notable summary results:

- Engineering tools where training may be needed: GPS/Total Station equipment, Engineering Field Tools Software, Iowa Engineering Spreadsheets, CADD
- Soils/GIS training may be needed for: LiDAR,

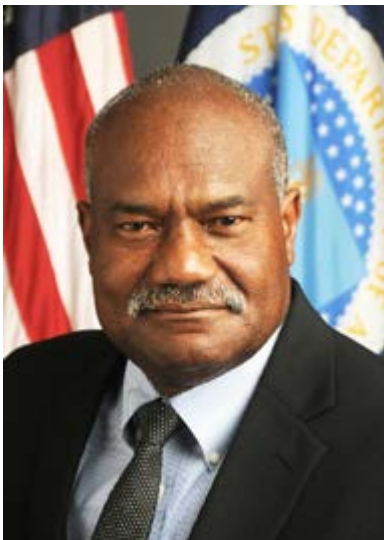
Web Soil Survey, ArcMap, Penetrometer, Tabletop Demonstration, Rainfall Simulator

- More than half of respondents said they needed training or additional training on 18 of the 24 tools in the Ecological Sciences area.

Bednarek encourages staff members with ideas for new tools or equipment to contact the area member of the Technology and Tools committee. Those area members include:

- Area 1 – Clint Miller
- Area 2 – Justin Goemaat
- Area 3 – LuAnn Rolling or Norman Friedrich
- Area 4 – Luke Forney
- Area 5 – T.J. Mathis

You can find the complete survey results on the Iowa NRCS SharePoint site at https://ems-team.usda.gov/sites/NRCS_Iowa/Toolkit/default.aspx.



IN MEMORIAM: CHIEF PEARLIE REED

Former NRCS Chief and USDA Assistant Secretary for Administration, passed away Friday, April 8.

Chief Reed began his remarkable career with NRCS in 1968 as a student intern in Walnut Ridge, Arkansas. Through a wealth of experiences and job responsibilities, he eventually served and led our agency as Chief from 1998 to 2002. He was nationally recognized for his dedication and commitment to working with farmers and ranchers and for supporting the mission of NRCS.

Changes In IOWA NRCS PERSONNEL

NAME	TITLE	NATURE OF ACTION	EFFECTIVE DATE	LOCATION
Allen, Matthew	Soil Conservationist	Promotion	3/20/16	Logan
Beebe, Miranda Ann	Program Assistant	Name Change	3/25/16	Fairfield
Boersma, Justin Jay	District Conservationist	Promotion	4/3/16	Cherokee/Primghar
Garbarino, Gabriel P.	District Conservationist	Promotion	4/3/16	Manchester
Harris, Aris Anthony	Soil Conservationist	Reassignment	3/6/16	Council Bluffs
Huck, Daniel Duwain	Program Assistant	Promotion	3/20/16	West Union
Morrell, Ray N.	District Conservationist	Voluntary Retirement	3/31/16	Indianola
Osborn, Christian Devon	State Conservation Engineer	Reassignment	4/3/16	Des Moines
Sprague, Richard A.	Soil Conservationist (Grassland Specialist)	Voluntary Retirement	3/31/16	Atlantic
Wedemeyer, Alan	Agronomist	Career Cond Appointment	3/20/16	Ft. Dodge

Changes In IDALS-DSC PERSONNEL

NAME	TITLE	NATURE OF ACTION	EFFECTIVE DATE	LOCATION
Conrad, Deb	Conservation Assistant	New Employee	4/25/16	Iowa SWCD
Davis, Cindy	Conservation Assistant	Transfer from Marion SWCD	3/11/16	Mahaska SWCD
Patterson, Phil	Environmental Specialist	Retirement	3/31/16	Union SWCD



BIG HELP: FROM LITTLE PEOPLE

Rye and Reg Potts, sons of Calhoun County SWCD Commissioner Shannan Potts, recently helped out the district by unloading trees for their annual tree sale.

-Submitted by Peg Lenz, Conservation Assistant, Rockwell City.

SEEKING NOMINATIONS: CONSERVATION WOMAN OF THE YEAR

The Conservation Partnership is seeking nominations for the second annual Conservation Woman of the Year award, sponsored by the Federal Women's Program. The award seeks to recognize a woman who has made significant contributions to conservation and the improvement of Iowa's natural resources conservation through achievements on her own land, her career or voluntary efforts.

The following criteria shall be used during selection:

- Self-nominations will be accepted.
- A woman can win once every five years.
- Must be an Iowa resident or own land in Iowa.
- Eligible women include farmers, landowners, agency and non-profit staff, policy makers, volunteers, etc.
- Current members of FWP are not eligible.

The nomination form can be found on the Iowa NRCS and Conservation Districts of Iowa websites. Nominations are due July 1 to Laura Crowell. They can be emailed to Laura.Crowell@ia.usda.gov or mailed to RM 693 Federal Building, 210 Walnut Street, Des Moines, IA, 50309.

The award will be presented at the Annual Soil and Water Districts Commissioners Conference, August 28-30, in Des Moines.

DISTRACTED DRIVING: STAY FOCUSED, STAY SAFE

Avoid the Dash to the Dashboard

Dashboard infotainment systems allow drivers to stay connected. But just because we can do something, **DOESN'T MEAN WE SHOULD.**

IT'S MORE DISTRACTING THAN YOU THINK

Drivers talking on handheld or hands-free devices can **FAIL TO SEE 50% OF THEIR SURROUNDINGS**

80% OF DRIVERS MISTAKENLY BELIEVE hands-free devices are safer than handheld

MORE THAN 30 STUDIES show hands-free devices don't make drivers any safer – the brain remains distracted by the conversation

Sources: National Safety Council, Texas Transportation Institute, AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety
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Learn more at: distracteddriving.nsc.org

53% OF U.S. DRIVERS believe hands-free devices must be safe if built into vehicles

Hands-free features in dashboards can increase mental distraction

INFOTAINMENT IS ABOUT CONVENIENCE – NOT SAFETY

The following actions don't make us safer drivers:

- Talking on the phone
- Checking email
- Posting a social status
- Ordering take-out

Vehicle technologies should prevent crashes, not increase their likelihood.

CONVERSATIONS WITH OUR CARS

Studies show using voice to text is **MORE DISTRACTING THAN TEXTING** by hand.

You: "Text Mike."
Car: "Begin Speaking."

You: "Thanks Mike, your order arrived yesterday."
Car: "Thanks Nike, Yoder arrived yesterday."

You: "Cancel! Text Mike."

Sources: National Safety Council, Texas Transportation Institute, AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety
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Learn more at: distracteddriving.nsc.org